

THE RELATIONS OF KINDRED

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be divorced from the patterns of relationships which they symbolize, and their role cannot be understood except in the fact. 593

If then we turn back to the common life of the families of the small farmers, it is these very terms which give us the clue to the relationships which that life builds up.

In the Irish family, the sons and the daughters are equally subordinate; there is no formal distinction made between them. The kinship terms of both the English and the Irish languages reflect this equivalence of siblings. In either case, one term, son or *mac*, reflects the unity of the position of all male children, the procreated generation, from the point of view of the elder or procreant pair, the mother and father. Similarly, a single term in both languages, brother and *dear-bhráthair*, expresses for the siblings their common occupancy of that position. Rural Ireland knows neither primogeniture nor junior right. Except as age differences separate them informally, the brothers occupy the same status both within and outside the family group. Thus neighbors and other outsiders refer to them all alike as "the boys" of the farmer's family. 593 601

Accordingly, their equality reflects itself in farm activity. All are on an equal footing there. The brothers are all alike under the father's direction and control as long as they remain on the farm. They work together, and the years of common effort and common dependence create a strong solidarity between them. Though only one of them may ordinarily expect to inherit land and cattle, the others renounce their rights as it were in the interests of the identification of the family group with the land they work. The bloody faction fights which used to disfigure Irish country life have practically passed away, but the forces which brought them into existence still continue. Many a country fight involving a dispute over rights of way and water courses brings in the adherents of all the brothers of either 593 628 [428]

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593 house, and, though the cases nowadays find their way into
● 628 the courts, a very common defense is that the feud is very
long-standing and that "the two grandfathers" began it.
The tales written in the last century by William Carleton,
who wrote of a life he himself knew intimately, describe
faction fights in which whole parishes became involved,
but the center of disturbance was invariably a family dispute
in which the brothers of a family ranged with their
friends against those of another. So fierce is the solidarity
which the identification of brothers and their land calls
forth that even today in Clare the name "defending Tim
Flanagan's title" is jocularly given to forcible resistance to
eviction, after a famous stalwart of the last century whose
ten sons fought valiantly for their father's farm.

593 In fact, this emotional attachment is strong enough some-
589 times to preclude the breaking up of the family. Two in-
stances of this sort came under the authors' special notice
out of the many which occur. It is difficult to get the exact
figures, since census materials deal only with the marital
status of farm owners, but many of the bachelor-owned
farms of Clare may be of this type. In the first case, two
brothers and four sisters occupied a small holding of twenty-
three acres and a four-room house for over fifty years. Sev-
eral of them at various times had tried to break away; in fact,
two brothers did, but the ones who stayed gave as their reason
first that they hadn't wanted to leave the old people and
afterwards that none of them had wanted "to be the first
to leave." The second case was very similar. Two brothers
and a sister had stayed on to work a small farm for their old
parents, but, when the old couple died, none of them wanted
to leave and each felt too old for marriage.

593 Whatever differences make a rift in this fraternal front
428 are matters more of preparation for leaving the farm family
than of internal differentiation in status and behavior. On
most small farms only one son can be kept at home as suc-

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number was reduced to only 580,000. The great famine of 1845 to 1852 and the tide of emigration which followed brought about a rapid decline in the use of the language. In addition, the elementary school system was directed toward substituting English for Irish, and until 1922 instruction in most schools was given in the English tongue. It was reported in 1946 that only about 40,000 persons in the Republic used Gaelic as their true vernacular (Freeman 1960:166-169).

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All Inis Beag folk of the age of eight years and older speak English as well as Irish, many with greater fluency than mainland peasants, for English is taught in the school and is spoken with Gaelic in homes where a realistic attitude toward emigration prevails. As in most of Ireland before 1922, English was employed as the medium of instruction in the school, and sermons in the church were delivered in English, even today the islanders confess to their priests in English—a fact little known. The widespread ability of the folk to use English is not readily apparent, however, for several reasons: the people are subsidized by the government to have their children learn Irish at school, and curates have urged, even threatened, that the foreign tongue not be spoken on moral and nativistic grounds; teachers have ridiculed English speech idiosyncracies of certain students and adult islanders before their pupils and, as a result, have induced shyness among the youth, the secretiveness of many persons and suspicion of outsiders of others prevent them from revealing their linguistic aptitudes to strangers; a few folk are nativists themselves and shun the use of English for that reason; and, finally, I have witnessed islanders "cod" (jokingly misinform) outsiders as to the true language situation.

The English speech of the islanders, as is common throughout rural Ireland, represents a syncretism of Gaelic and English forms; that is, English vocabulary is merged with Irish grammar, and Gaelic phonemes and speech rhythms influence English pronunciation. Irish terms commonly are incorporated into English speech, and, conversely, English words form an important part of the vocabulary of the folk when they employ the vernacular. Nativists are extremely critical of English vocabulary borrowings, a point of view not shared by the islanders; the latter are equally critical of the creation of new Gaelic terms by nativists for cultural innovations. The folk, among themselves, also are critical of the language revival movement, since most of their number must emigrate to English speaking countries where lack of mastery of the tongue places them at a competitive disadvantage. Irish speech is judged by nativists as "good" or "bad" according to at least three criteria: the prevalence of despised English words, the retention of traditional Gaelic terms, and the richness of Irish idiom. Many observers, including linguists, believe that the "best" Gaelic in Ireland is spoken in Inis Beag and nearby islands; however, my wife and I had visitors from the mainland who were declared to be more proficient Irish speakers than the island folk themselves by Inis Beag people who met and talked with them. In this case, probing revealed that the evaluation was based on our friends' mastery of idiomatic expression and clarity of pronunciation. The ability of the native speaker to combine accent and idiom is known as *blas*, and the folk can ascertain readily whether a stranger has learned Gaelic "from the cradle" or "at the school" (called "Christian Brothers' Irish" after teachers of that order).

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361 It is apparent from the size of these settlements that some such term as hamlet might be more appropriate than village, but I have chosen to follow island usage. Within each village, no house is further than 50 yards from its nearest neighbor, some even sharing the same gable, and a myriad of paths serve to link single and grouped dwellings with a main road.

184 Although the traditions of Inis Beag and islands in its vicinity can be designated as a subculture of the Irish system taken as a whole, nevertheless there are marked differences in custom between them. One might suppose that cultural variation would be slight in an island as small and stable as Inis Beag, but [829] the remarkable fact is that there are differences among the four villages. The folk [628] are well aware of inter-village, inter-island, and island-mainland cultural variability, and they also possess a well defined image of their own way of life. At this point, I would like to examine the attitudes of the people toward their own communities, Inis Thiar, the mainland, themselves, and outsiders who visit or live among them.

829 High and Castle Villages attract the fewest opinions. The inhabitants of [628] the former are accused of arriving late at island affairs, especially to mass in the [184] chapel so close at hand, and dwellers in the latter of keeping ferocious dogs which [231] bark at night and molest visitors. Until recently, each Castle household had from two to four dogs, and it was possible for those living in Low to know when a visitor making a night visit had arrived in Castle by the outcry of the animals. [512] Castle people, like those in Terrace, milk their cows earlier in the day than do [823] other islanders, and since both settlements are located on the upper terraces and command exceptional views of the mainland coast and sea around, the dwellers in each claim that their panorama is the most inspiring.

829 The numerous attitudes toward Low and Terrace Villages mostly reflect [628] their positions in the island and resultant differential acculturation; generally [184] speaking, the local culture becomes more traditional as one moves eastward from [177] Low, the jetty, and the strand. It is often said that Terrace folk "are strangers to [178] the rest of us" and resemble the inhabitants of Inis Thiar, whom many writers and [342] scientists claim are the most traditional of Irish peasants. More cottages are [461] thatched and the indigenous costume is more in evidence in Terrace than elsewhere, and the villagers there are the earliest risers and hardest workers and tend to arrive early for events, in contradistinction to their High neighbors. Families in Terrace are considered more closely knit and cooperative and the people more [275] self-reliant than those in the other communities. The men spend less time in the pubs, do not need drink to "give them courage" to sing and dance, and are livelier and more extroverted at parties. Not only do Terrace folk believe that their village is best located as to beauty of land and seascape, but they claim that it is quieter [241] and the air is healthier there than elsewhere in Inis Beag. Another Terrace custom often cited is that of farmers using all four types of seaweed as fertilizers and setting their gardens in the same manner; farmers in the other settlements use [421] only two or three kinds of seaweed and set their gardens in a variety of ways. Lastly, the practice of seeking wrack is most prevalent among Terrace men. The freighter ran aground near Terrace, and the men there were said to have acquired more salvage than other islanders as a result of their being close to the ship and

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inveterate wrack-boomers. The separateness of Terrace villagers was made most apparent at the time of the shipwreck through the aggression, both overt and covert, directed against them by their fellows

The behavior of Low villagers, on the other hand, is often the opposite of that of Terrace people less than a mile away; for instance, the folk of Low are the latest risers and milkers, the least industrious, and the most prone to spend time in the pubs. They claim to be descendants of the earliest immigrants in the seventeenth century and are the most boastful of family genealogies. However, most of the landless householders live in Low and as such are held in low repute by landed villagers. People here are the most receptive to tourists, and the two pubs which attract outsiders and the several private homes in which tourists may lodge all are located in Low. It is said that Terrace folk do not need and are indifferent to tourists, whereas Low villagers could not survive without them, either economically or psychologically. Although islanders today visit nearby islands and the mainland less than did their forebears at the turn of the century, the people of Low are considered the most traveled, past and present, of the local population.

As for attitudes directed outward, most islanders regard the culture of Inis Thiar as more traditional than their own. Often heard is the assertion that 70 years ago the inhabitants of the two islands were almost alike as to behavior and beliefs, but the coming of lighthouse and coast guard families, and a permanent curate after 1919, to Inis Beag introduced successive changes which gradually widened the cultural gap between the two. Another factor of importance hindering acculturation in Inis Thiar has been its lack of good landing facilities for visitors to come ashore; the steamer must stand off the jetty of Inis Thiar in the unprotected and often turbulent sound and be met by canoes, whereas it can approach closely the strand of Inis Beag, between the jetty and a point of land, where under most weather conditions it is relatively calm.

Visitors to Inis Beag also hold the same opinion of the two cultures, and the most often made comparison between the islands is the Irish spoken in them. The people of Inis Beag and Inis Thiar recognize slight differences in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation between the two speech communities, but they seldom rank their respective proficiencies, unless outsiders in one island assert that the Gaelic spoken in the other is "purer." Once a tourist angered visiting Inis Thiar fishermen in my presence by publicly pronouncing that the Irish in Inis Beag is superior, and that he would send his children here to learn Gaelic and then to Inis Thiar to learn English; the tongue-in-check statement was prompted by a discussion of the linguistic skills of the publican in the neighboring island, who is called "the English speaker" because of the rapidity of his speech and chronic misuse of esoteric English words. Indigenous nativists are far more numerous and militant in Inis Thiar than in Inis Beag, and the anger of the fishermen reflected pride in their own culture and their belief that it is more traditional than that of Inis Beag.

Inis Thiar folk are thought by their neighbors to the east to be more industrious and extroverted than themselves. They are believed to rise earlier, work longer and more energetically with fewer breaks for contemplation or gossip with

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829 passersby, and live more frugally and save more as a result. Gruff, impatient, and often impolite, they talk rapidly in high pitched voices and shout at their beasts and at one another from a distance, and on occasion they will use profanity. Inis Thiar men drink more than Inis Beag men, it is claimed; rather than sipping slowly and savoring their stout and whiskey, they consume it quickly and are more concerned with the effects that it produces. It is admitted in Inis Beag that all Irish are inquisitive and disposed to gossip about their fellows, but islanders to the west are openly so and will "demand" information from tourists and will discuss one another quite freely. Braver, "bolder," and less concerned with morality, men from Inis Thiar rowed to the freighter on several occasions and contested successfully with local folk for salvage, which caused some Inis Beag wives to deride their husbands for not possessing these qualities. Women of Inis Thiar also are thought to be braver and bolder, and remain less in their homes, visit relatives and acquaintances and the shops more often, and in general participate more in social events than do their sisters to the east. Despite being extremely critical of Inis Thiar folk for possessing the above and many other less prominent traits, the people of Inis Beag grudgingly admit that their neighbors possess greater *esprit de corps* and enjoy life more than themselves. Once a person emigrates from Inis Beag, he or she seldom returns; but Inis Thiar emigrants are "clever" and do well abroad, and often return with earnings to remain at home, especially women who come back with "fortunes" to seek husbands.

829 The attitudes of islanders toward those living on the mainland—"towns-
186 people" or "city folk"—reveal a primitivistic bias which probably can be traced
[121] back to the Viking occupation, when towns first were established in Ireland and primitive Celts became transformed into peasants: "that primitive people retain a morality which civilized people tend to lose; that a man's moral worth declines in rough proportion to his distance from the soil; that civilization must be held accountable for man's noteworthy catalogue of vices;" (Ardrey 1961:147-148). Inis Beag folk regard themselves as impeccably moral and mainlanders, although fellow Catholics, as immoral; yet the "progressiveness" of the latter is envied secretly and gives rise to the sensitivity of islanders to the real and imagined denigration of them by mainlanders for their backwardness. Mainland Irish are thought to be overly pecuniary, dishonest, rude, and promiscuous. When visiting towns and cities on the mainland, Inis Beag people for many years have worn mainland attire so as not to be singled out and ridiculed. They are ashamed of their English speech—even though adults speak the tongue with greater proficiency than many urban dwellers—and believe that they are prey to dishonest shopkeepers, who are ever ready to take advantage of their ignorance and naiveté. Whenever my wife and I paid short visits to a nearby port or to Dublin, we were requested by islanders to make purchases, have repairs made under our name, and transact other business for them because we were "too clever to be cheated." Once in the city, the folk miss Inis Beag with its clear air and broad expanses, and they complain of the tall buildings (seldom more than four stories high) which "press in" on them, the bustle of the main street, the curious stares of townspeople, and the dirtiness of buildings and roads. In claiming that few islanders would prefer to live there

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conditions appraised. The community regulates its internal affairs through the *cuaird* as well. It is here public opinion is formulated. There is nothing formal about the decisions made upon the incidents arising from day to day. The local community has no implement with which to enforce its will. But it has the power of gossip and boycott (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:190-191).

Decisions of this sort and their sanctions in Inis Beag rest largely in the hands of government officials and the priest, headmaster, and king.

Many folk long have believed that the island needs a council with representatives from each of the four villages serving on it, to foster cooperation and to formulate policies which bear on the welfare of all. After independence in 1922, a move was made to form such a council, but the civil war interrupted the process; since that time, according to the islanders, the opposition of curates and king, none of whom have wanted their vested interests threatened, has succeeded in blocking the formation of such a body. Other forces at work, however, are the lassitude and ambivalence toward authority of the people, and their dislike and jealousy of one another. They complain of the lack of leadership, or of the "wrong" kind of leadership, as in the case of the priest and king; but they are unable or unwilling to expend the energy needed to get themselves organized and "pull together" for the common good. Often those who advocate the formation of a council will, in the next breath, express their dislike or distrust of its potential members, or a desire to remain independent of its collective will should it run contrary to their own. A vacationing emigrant who said, "We have no sense of civic pride and responsibility but think only of ourselves," assessed the situation accurately.

Among the traits attributed to Inis Beag folk by nativists and primitivists are self-reliance, independence, and individualism. But the self-reliance of the islanders has become undermined increasingly since 1891 by a benevolent government; their independence is severely curtailed by restrictions imposed on them by curate, headmaster, king, and their fellows; and their individualism is a figment of literary imagination disguising a strict conformism. Inis Beag as much as any community is characterized by gossip, ridicule, and opprobrium, which gain their effectiveness as social control mechanisms from the deep concern of the folk with "saving face," and which serve to limit freedom of action and behavioral idiosyncrasy. When asked to rank the major deficiencies of island life, the people almost without exception place the prevalence of malicious gossiping, along with poverty and the intrusion of the clergy into secular affairs, at the head of their list.

No matter how much the islanders detest gossiping when they are its victims, they nevertheless welcome every opportunity to engage in it. News of an event passes quickly by word of mouth from Low to Terrace Villages, and variations in the description of the event are usually numerous due to the distortions of rumor. In order to circumvent gossip, parties are organized at the last moment and invitations issued by small boys moving quietly from door to door in the night; persons will leave the island—sometimes to emigrate, visit the hospital with a serious illness, or enter an order—without previous announcement, running from their homes to the strand to board the last canoes for the steamer; and mail is posted just prior to the arrival of the steamer and picked up immediately after it

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green sweaters, men shamrocks in their buttonholes, and girls green hair ribbons, and there is much visiting in the afternoon following a special meal. Women spend the last weeks of Lent preparing new clothes for their spouses, their children, and themselves, which first are worn to mass on Easter. Eggs are accumulated before the feast day so that each member of the family will have several to eat at breakfast before mass, and in some homes the children gather and hide eggs the week before Easter to see who can collect the most by Sunday morning.

June 14th in Inis Beag is "pattern day," derived from the word patron, which honors the patron saint. Until the 1920s, when suppressed by the clergy, this day and the two days following it rivaled the 12 days of Christmas in festivity. Then it was customary for people from nearby islands and the mainland to visit Inis Beag, and the local folk in turn to attend pattern days in islands and communities in their vicinity. The celebration commenced with the digging out of sand from the church of the patron saint and from his tomb, or "bed," so that during the night of vigil islanders and visitors could pray while walking around the grave and rest in the church to gain special favor from the saint and from God. The day itself saw masses celebrated in the chapel, and athletic, dancing, and other competitions staged on the strand and contiguous common land. Tents were erected to accommodate vendors of food and drink, as well as solo and figure dancers who performed to the tunes played by visiting musicians of note. Most visitors departed at the end of the day, but those who remained were invited to take part in two more days of revelry in certain island homes, where dancing, singing, and drinking prevailed day and night. It was the prevalence of factional fighting and promiscuous behavior engendered by drunkenness which prompted the church to restrict the traditional practices of pattern day.

In the 1930s, the priest inaugurated a custom of celebrating mass on pattern day in the church of the patron saint; but it persisted for only two decades, and today the bed is cleared of sand but the church is not. My wife and I observed only 11 persons praying and resting during the night of vigil in 1960. Miraculous cures, appropriately embodied in legends and anecdotes, are claimed for persons who have propitiated the patron saint in this manner in the past, and most of those who still observe the vigil are seeking relief for physical ills. The most recent cures reported are for spinal meningitis, rheumatism, a deformed knee, and an eyeball pierced with a thorn. No work is done on pattern day now, and a dance in the evening, seldom attended by visitors other than tourists, is the only vestige of the gaiety which once marked the day. This dance, just as the St. Patrick's Day dance, did not take place in 1960, even though an accordionist and two other mainlanders came out by *curach* to attend it; the shyness of local girls rather than the tide was the disruptive factor on this occasion.

All Saints is a holyday of obligation November 1st, and is followed next day by another feast—All Souls. One of the most popular of humorous anecdotes deals with All Saints' Day in a neighboring island, where once long ago the Church of Ireland pastor gave the day off to men working for him; when ten days later they asked to be off once again for St. Martin's Day, he inquired with seeming pique, "And where was Martin on All Saints' Day?" The feast of All Souls is also a workless day in Inis Beag, although the cemetery is given its one cleaning of the

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Celts. But local legend, historical evidence, and genealogical data collected by my wife and me indicate that the present population is descended from immigrants who came to the island from many parts of Ireland following the Cromwellian incursion of the seventeenth century. The islanders still express bitterness over conditions of poverty and servitude experienced by their ancestors during the 300 years that they lived under absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. All of the excesses of foreign domination suffered by mainland peasants were suffered by the inhabitants of Inis Beag, but were aggravated by the ordinary hardships of island living. Little was known about events in Inis Beag during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the island was visited by archeologists and publicized in their scientific writings. The surrounding area of the mainland was very much isolated and seldom visited at that time, although trading between Inis Beag and nearby communities was carried on, and passing ships sometimes called at the island.

Agricultural pursuits have always dominated the subsistence economy of Inis Beag. Most householders own land on which they grow potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes rye and sally rods and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, asses, and horses. The back of the island, behind the communities, is divided into four strips, and each landowner possesses numerous plots located along the "quarter" on which his village fronts. The average combined holding is sixteen acres, and almost 50 percent of the land is composed of arable indigenous and manufactured soils. Potatoes are the staple crop, and they are supplemented by various other vegetables, milk from cattle and goats, meat from island sheep, fish, eggs, and other foods, many of which are imported and sold in the shops. Rye is grown for thatching, and sally rods are used to weave several types of containers. Other subsistence activities (which also provide income for some folk) are knitting, weaving, crocheting, tailoring, and sandal making.

A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and sheep fattened on the island and of surplus potatoes and fish, the collection of seaweed for extraction of iodine at a mainland factory, the keeping of tourists in private homes, and the manufacturing of craft objects for sale to visitors and for export. At the turn of the century, fishing from canoes—with nets and lines often many miles out in the ocean—was an important subsistence and income activity. A few islanders who owned little or no land lived primarily by fishing and kelp-making. But over the past few decades, fish have become less plentiful and the weather more inclement, especially during winter